

ARTICLE APPEARED
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WASHINGTON STAR
31 MARCH 1979

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How Pentagon secrets find their way into public print

"Jackpot." That's what 36-year-old free lance writer Howard Morland hit when he put an article together for Progressive magazine on how to make a hydrogen bomb.

I'm not sure whether the article represents that Morland, who specializes in energy and nuclear weapons issues, is a genius or that the U.S. intelligence community is stupid. Further, I'm not troubled by the fact that Morland put the article together. But I am troubled by the fact that hostile foreign intelligence agencies, which I believe are as competent as our CIA in gathering information from public sources, may have put such an article together long ago themselves. After all, Morland had to put the pieces together one at a time whereas our enemies can devote a whole scientific group to the mission.

From August 1965 until December 1972, I served as chief of the Investigation Division, Office of the Secretary of Defense. During that period I supervised 222 cases of unauthorized disclosures of classified defense information and personally led teams in the conduct of about 85 of the most serious cases. The amusing thing about this H-bomb piece is that all the trouble began because Morland submitted his article to the government for review.

Articles by William Beecher, a former New York Times reporter, were the subject of 22 investigations by my office. Jack Anderson caused me to conduct 15 investigations of his articles. Many articles of each of these reporters were equally earth-shaking, particularly Beecher's SALT leak article of July 23, 1971, exposing our fall-back position to the Soviets in our then upcom-

ing SALT talks. Anderson's articles on the India-Pakistan war and the Vietnam war in 1971 had the intelligence community upside down.

Neither of these writers bothered to submit articles for review and hence had no problem personally. In fact, Beecher was rewarded by an appointment as deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. Another amusing point is that about two months after his departure from the Pentagon, Beecher published a story in the Boston Globe that Israelis had the atomic bomb, another shocker.

I guess the moral of my story is, "Don't ask questions, just go ahead and publish," because the U.S. government is not geared to do anything to either the reporter or the publication.

Although Morland hit the jackpot, there have been many others. In April 1969, Dr. John S. Foster, then director of the Office of Defense Research and Engineering in the Pentagon, was greatly upset over a story about the then Project 949, which was one of many code names assigned to our satellite "Spy in the Sky." In fact, there had been many disturbing "leaks" of classified "top secret" data in the press on Project 949. The Australian government was on one or two occasions thoroughly miffed because they, too, had a part in the program and didn't relish the public exposure.

The investigation pretty much tells the story of our problem with Morland's H-bomb article. In short, The left hand doesn't always seem to know what the right hand is giving out.

I was ordered to undertake the investigation. Briefly the results, and other cumulative observations I had made doing other leak cases, are as follows:

First, although the U.S. government (CIA and DIA) continually gathers bits and pieces of intelligence data, we somehow manage to forget, when we gratuitously give out data on a program or project, that several highly intelligent U.S. writers with electronic, aeronautical and other scientific backgrounds are gathering bits and pieces. Also, so are foreign enemy intelligence personnel.

As in Project 949, Dr. Foster's former office starts out by advertising certain specifications for a project in the Commerce Daily Bulletin. Interested private contractors become involved and the theoretical project begins to take form. Certain electronic frequencies are discussed. Certain people such as the writer of electronic articles are quickly alerted by the nature of frequencies that DDR&E is not contemplating the building of an amateur radio broadcasting station but rather something in space.

The project slowly progresses with more and more data being released until it is believed it can become a reality. At that moment, all hell breaks loose and caveats from secret to top secret rain down on all paperwork involved. However, for years the Pentagon has never clearly understood that the classification, as far as writers are concerned, is not retroactive.

At this point the writers have filed away the bits and pieces on the new but yet unidentified program. At some later time a writer will prepare an article from the bits and pieces and add a little deductive reasoning and imagination and develop an article perhaps not 100 per cent on target but close

Where do these bits and pieces come from? Aside from the initial release in the Commerce Daily Bulletin, the tidbits might have come from a magazine article by Dr. Foster, unclassified statements made by three successive secretaries of defense before congressional committees, remarks after a speech made by officials of the Air Force, unclassified Defense Department budget material and to some extent through material released by the contractor.

In the case of Project 949, when we exposed all the public source material to an Air Force general in charge of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs, he declared that 85 per cent of the Top Secret Project 949 had already been compromised.

The solution is that we need a better monitoring capability for what classified data are being given out.

Today Progressive magazine is undergoing a court test to prevent Howard Morland's highly informative and classified article from being published only because he hit the "jackpot." If we had not been so stupid years ago, we would have court-tested earlier articles.

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